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A
CHARGE TO THE CLERGY
OF THE
ARCHDEACONRY of *St. ALBAN's.*

CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF WILMINGTON



A
C H A R G E
TO THE
C L E R G Y
OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY of *St. ALBAN's*,

AT THE PRIMARY VISITATION,

Held MAY 7, 1789.

By JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT, M. A.

PREBENDARY of LINCOLN, and ARCHDEACON of *St. ALBAN's*.

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M. DCC. LXXXIX.

A
C H A R E

TO THE

C I E R Y

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ASAPH

AT THE PRIMA VISITATION



BY JOSEPH J. JONES, D.D.

PATERSON, ST. ASAPH, AND ARCHDEACONRY OF ST. ASAPH

Printed by J. J. Jones, St. Asaph, 1862

CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

ARCHDEACONRY of *St. ALBAN'S*.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

THE circumstances of a trust but recently committed to me, necessarily confine my first Address to some general topic. Any subject of importance to our common duty, whilst it cannot fail to engage your regard, will enable me with greater confidence to require your attention.

Of the duties of the Priesthood, of the dignity of its holy offices, of the purity of manners which it requires, and of the various obligations which it

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imposes,

imposes, experience must have taught much to many of you ; and the zeal and wisdom, the persuasive eloquence and anxious admonitions of good and holy men, who have watched and laboured for the Church in all ages, have supplied abundant lessons to the same effect. In that extensive field I shall choose one path.

To serve God in the private cell of the bosom, is a great part of our duty ; but to glorify him openly and before the world, is a part of duty much enhanced by the teaching of the Gospel, and enjoined expressly by many signal precepts of our Lord and of his Apostles : it is this which gives the name of a confession to the whole of Christianity ; it is this which characterises its disciples as so many witnesses, and which defines their lives as pregnant testimonies of the truth. But upon no persons do the obligations to this main portion of the christian service bind so completely, and so forcibly, as upon its Ministers : their influence in society
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is expressed in the strongest figures ; what is spoken generally of the followers of Christ, applies eminently to them ; they are in a special sense “ the salt of “ the world,” as it belongs more particularly to them to season and correct the conversation and commerce of mankind, to mix imperceptibly their own habits with those of secular persons, and so to communicate a favour to society which may resist its evil tendencies, and, as far as may be, rectify its whole temper and constitution.

In order to state the true nature of this branch of duty, let us first consider the necessity it imposes of remaining in society, and of supporting with unwearied diligence the part assigned to us. In the first ages of Christianity many fled into the wilderness, and lived in perpetual sadness and seclusion ; but it was when none but solitudes were asylums, when the desert was the only sanctuary safe from persecution, and dens and caverns the only temples undefiled by polluted

pomps. If any, in more prosperous ages of the Church, have followed the example, and declined the blessings of peace and christian fellowship in the common benefits and mutual aids of life, however eminent in zeal and sanctity, they have manifestly perverted the example: if they did it to overcome the world, their error is apparent; a flight is not a victory: it is our duty rather to overcome evil with good, injuries with benefits, pride by humility; to endeavour to serve all men in the ways of social intercourse: if they did it to escape temptation altogether, they departed from the sphere and terms of their obedience, and declined the benefits of trial in order to avoid its perils. Unhappily this was the error of many who were well qualified to teach and to guide others, to assist them with their fortitude, and to encourage them by their example. But there remained temptations even in such solitudes, and forer ones, to recompense the indiscretion of those who would not recollect that all things work together
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for the good of such as love God. The various conflicts which a changeful world encourages in all its incidents and periods, concur to bring the fruits of obedience to maturity. Varieties in life, like varieties in the seasons, are the means of growth and fertility : temptation strengthens fortitude ; calamities give patience room to triumph ; riches extend the power and influence of charity ; and poverty promotes the exercise of resignation. The staff of pilgrimage ; the sword, shield, and buckler ; the girdle for the loins ; the helmet for the head ; the narrow gate which gives us entrance, and the way that stretches out before us ; the services of charity, and the ministration to the wants of others ; the talent put to use, and the stewardship entrusted to us ; all declare a state of active warfare, of travel, and of various service. Virtues grow, like other habits, where their opportunities abound most : and where God hath appointed our work, there must be our improvement. Having touched these obvious truths, let us however call to mind how many

many entertain them too licentiously. If with the mistakes of godly men in past times we should put off their severer virtues; if with the painful discipline and rigorous penances, which began at length to be valued for their own sakes, we should lay aside the prudent exercise, and necessary measures of self-denial, as it should be exercised in due subservience to substantial piety, the latter state might be worse than the former. We have still much to contemplate and to copy in the holy patterns of past times; when a zeal for the celebration of religious exercises and the offices of devotion was not limited to little portions of time, distant in their periods, and suspended at all other seasons. The spacious walls and lofty roof of this venerable Edifice, will instruct us that they were raised by men who loved the courts of God's house better than all other dwellings: they will admonish us that they were not built for rare and solitary acts of service, but for frequency, for diurnal exercises, and as the beloved home of pious men. It was from
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these central places, as blood issues from the heart, which again receives it, and again remits it through its accustomed channels, that the ministers of truth and charity took their circuits, and returned, and lived in quiet amidst the tumult of surrounding cities. It deserves indeed our best returns of thankfulness, that the salutary care of a Church which has ever laboured to establish the ready aids of godly ministers in all places, has multiplied the stations of religion among us: but let us not imagine that the spirit of Superstition was ever vast enough to fill these noble structures, in which Devotion felt its flight encouraged, in which Solitude was amplified, and the voice of Praise enlarged.

But to prosecute our view: It seems evident that it is one thing to leave the world, and another not to acquiesce in its corruptions; the first of these cannot be our duty, the other most certainly is. We are bound to remain in society for the purposes of
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mutual aid; but when the Apostle's example instructs us to become all things to all men, it does not teach us to become like to those whom we desire to mend. Without some accommodation to the manners of men, we cannot join in their society; and yet we must not conform to their prevailing habits. These propositions must be reconciled; the task is difficult, but there is no part of all our duty more eminently necessary: let us then consider how it may be effected. It is not by forcing religion into little forms, and into points and questions wholly foreign to it, that we shall preserve ourselves from an undue conformity to the world. Religion is given to regulate the conscience, to supply the rules of equity and justice, of truth and moderation, of reason, equanimity, and humbleness of heart; of charity and holiness; and not to be the standard of external trifles, to decide the fashion of a garment, or to regulate a mode of salutation. Whatever tends to estrange the hearts of men from each other, or to confine their views and interests to little knots

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and classes of society, is entirely opposite to the spirit of a comprehensive faith, and to the just authority and entire harmony of Christ's church. But on the other hand, we are doubtless all sensible that it is not by joining in the public walks of life, and passing down the stream of customary pleasures, or by making the manners of the many the standard of our actions, that we can fulfill the Apostle's injunction of not conforming to the world. These remarks apply to us with such peculiar force, that it is scarcely necessary, but I hope not invidious, to press them. Such as bear the pastoral character, and are set out in the world as beacons to direct the wanderer, will know that it belongs not to them to mix *on equal terms* in all the levities of life, however palliated. It is in the softened appearances, and elusive deviations from severer maxims, that modern manners are most treacherous. Simple vices are curable by simple counsels; but a general dissolution in society, which entails the conse-

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quences of all disorders, without the certain character of any, is hardly to be remedied.

In comparisons with early ages, the world is very free in complimenting itself: let us see how justly. The genuine effects of Christianity in its earliest influence, appeared in many common principles of rectitude, admitted and allowed, and screened from open violation. These consequences prove the reverence which a pattern of true righteousness imposes upon minds in any degree reasonable; that these were undoubted effects of Christianity, appears from hence, that the progress of mere refinement among heathen nations never had produced a change so signal, in all the current maxims and acknowledged rules of life. It is justly questioned whether the dictates of philosophy ever wrought this reformation truly and sincerely in the hearts and lives of those who talked most proudly. How blind therefore is their ingratitude who have at any time borrowed their best light and
brightest

brightest lessons from the sacred sources without due acknowledgements ; or who ascribe the influence of Christianity to accidental, inadequate, and unworthy causes ! It is however but too sad a truth, that the genuine polish and becoming lustre which have ever shone upon the countenance of Christendom, like the radiance on the brows of Moses from his converse with the Lord, have been sometimes clouded by the vapours rising from a bad soil ; by the follies and corruptions of the many, or the ungodliness and worldly views of others. It must needs be that offences come : but there have not been wanting, by God's blessing, good and able guardians and defenders of the church in all times : of these not a few stood forth in past times, and laboured, at the risque and even with the forfeiture of their lives, to remedy abuses ; to restore the aids of pious learning to religion ; to counteract the low designs of craft ; to check the growth of wantonness ; to limit the encroachments of ambition ; and to discountenance the rage and folly of an head-

long superstition whether in maintaining, or reforming what might be amiss. To the praise of latter times it may be spoken, that these efforts have prevailed. We may boast, in honour of the present age, that gross and barbarous crimes, that ignorance and violence, implicit bigotry, with all the evils of a persecuting or a narrow spirit, are happily discouraged: let these things be thankfully acknowledged; let them stand upon the gainful side in our comparisons of present things with past: but let it not be thought to detract too much from these commendations, if we subjoin a cautionary view: though sordid vices and barbarous excesses, such as are in their own nature odious and contemptible, offensive to the conscience, and hurtful to the common name and benefit of man, are happily less general, yet they who live much in the world, have abundant reason to protect themselves against more subtle and less shocking overtures of vice. If evil habits shift only their appearances, or admit some outward regulations, the gain we have to show will not

be adequate to our advantages ; and there will be the additional danger of self-applause, and the countenance of custom, free from all the touch of censure : from hence may spring a softness that dissolves, a levity that dissipates, and an inattention which infatuates ; and these may slide into the places of more desperate and rebellious contradictions to our duty. Trifling deviations become eminently dangerous by generality ; for whilst all are pleased in their resemblance to each other, none may be safe, or in their proper character. It is then in such a world that we are to mix ; to accommodate ourselves in all ways possible, and yet not to conform to it : and this must be done : it must be done by never departing from our character, by a constant endeavour to render it attractive to others ; and then it will never prove an embarrassment to ourselves. If a casual participation of the ordinary pleasures of life may consist with our design, or even promote it, a love of them never can. We must prosecute our purpose by carefully declining all unreasonable

unreasonable scruples, and by avoiding with no less circumspection all mean submissions to the humours of others. If we desire to copy the Apostle's example in becoming all things to all men, the same Teacher will instruct us how this is to be effected with safety : it must not be by feeling less for the honour of religion, than we do for the fame and credit of a friend ; or by a false courtesy which permits Vice to hang out all her colours, unproved : these are no apostolical counsels : it must rather be by learning to weep with those that weep ; to rejoice with those that rejoice ; by knowing both how to want, and how to abound ; by sanctifying the good things of life with prayer and thanksgiving, as Job sanctified his children day by day, in the time of their rejoicing. These are safe measures of our duty, and will enable us to keep a social place in the companies of men, without hazard. It is not by the sourness of the fasting Pharisee, but by the cheerfulness of a spirit truly mortified, that we must hope to gain our purpose.

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It is not by such a moroseness as will furnish blemished and contracted notions of religion, but by habits which may render truth alluring, and by a freedom chastened and discreet, that we must strive to win men. If we desire to adapt our endeavours to the temper of the world, it must be by skilful applications; by superseding and preventing the occasions of transgression with address; by leading every favourable turn in social life to the ends of truth and counsel, that Religion may find a voice at other times beside those of solemn exhortation. To reconcile the precept of not conforming to the world, with these necessary assimilations, it will be most expedient and proper to shun those places where the votaries of Vice usurp a large interest, and prevail in number and appearance; to cultivate just periods of retirement which may provide a fund for future diligence; and then to strive in due time to stem the torrent of corruption. In that return into the circles and societies of the world; there will be opportunities of celebrating truth in its effects.

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To teach and to defend our holy Faith with vigour, constancy, and moderation ; to avoid giving offence to weak and unstable minds ; to prevent true candour from declining into dubious indifference ; to preserve unfeigned and lively convictions from the taint of froward and conceited petulance ; to commiserate those who are in error, when false teaching and seduction do not aggravate the guilt ; to love the persons of all men, require no slender measures of sincere attachment, charity, and prudence ; of a zeal which can glow without blazing, and fight for truth without a shout. Let us not imagine that such an happy temper is beyond our reach, since it is certainly much within the power of God to give it ; and he who has bidden us to ask, and promised to confer, encourages us to covet earnestly the best gifts. Barely to state such things, is to recommend them ; to desire them, is to learn them ; and to practise them, is to possess them. If we wish further to decline the vanities of endless disputation, or the dangerous mischief

chief of divided sentiments, we must not imitate the arrogance of those who pass large encomiums upon reason in general, whilst they draw the whole credit of it to their own reason in particular: we should rather study to improve the right use of our own reason by a joint participation of the common reason of the wise and good in all ages, who have marked the limits of truth from early times, and delivered it to succeeding guardians and defenders. Above all let us remember, that a soft and luxurious spirit is wholly incompatible with the doctrine of the cross, but more especially with the pastoral character. The Patriarch Jacob, who was a shepherd in the ordinary and proper sense, describes the labours of that charge: " In the day the
 " drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and
 " the sleep of mine eyes departed from me." But the words of the good Shepherd carry care and hardship to their greatest trials; " I lay down my life for
 " my sheep." And a similar duty we know devolves,

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with the occasions for it, on the guides to whom in general that earnest and thrice-repeated admonition given to the Apostles, descends.

Let me now add, that an invitation to contemplate any draught of our joint profession, though it bear the form of counsel, leaves the application common; and sets me at liberty to assume a part better suited to my inclination and abilities—to learn and to strive together with you.

It remains to address a few words to those whom it is neither my duty nor my inclination to overlook; to the assistant Officers and Wardens of the Church; whom both the statute and canon law have invested with so large and important a trust in our ecclesiastical establishment; to whom so material a superintendence of the church, of the reparation of its edifices, of the custody of all things fitting and becoming therein, appertains; to whom also the care of the poor, and a
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due responsibility for the order and decorum of the sacred offices of religion, belong. It remains to recommend it to them to concur honestly and heartily with the spiritual guides of their respective parishes, to all good purposes ; with a due regard to their own powers and privileges, where the exercise of them shall be necessary ; with a conscientious, but not jealous, watchfulness ; with firmness in due season, and brotherly love at all times.

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and responsibility for the order and decorum of the
social offices of religion, belong. It remains to recom-
mend to them to connect modesty and beauty with
the spiritual guides of their religious studies, to all
good purposes, with the right to their own powers
and privileges, where the service of their faith is
needed, with a conscientious and not false, with
affection, with kindness in the face, and brotherly
love to all others.

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